

## CSOs' Role and Contribution to the Implementation of the New Maritime Agendas

- Reflection Paper -

---

This paper aims to highlight the importance of a **multi-stakeholder** approach for achieving the recently adopted **Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea** and its scientific pillar, the **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda**, focusing in particular on the **role of civil society organisations (CSOs)** in fostering societal resilience and sustainable development in the Black Sea region and presenting CSOs' potential contribution to the implementation of these two agendas. The conclusions put forward in this paper are based on the input gathered from 118 participants at the Plenary session "How to Strengthen Black Sea Cooperation? A Multi-Stakeholder Approach", part of the **12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, Istanbul, Turkey)**, coming from 11 countries from the Black Sea region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine), which include all the countries covered by the **Black Sea Synergy Policy**.

---

### I. CONTEXT

The **Black Sea Synergy Policy** is a European political framework initiated in 2007 by Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, dedicated to regional cooperation among 10 Black Sea countries with the purpose of promoting political and economic reforms, supporting the stability and development of the region and facilitating the creation and implementation of concrete regional projects in a variety of domains.

Since 2014, the European Commission together with its member states have made important steps towards creating a dedicated agenda for the Black Sea Basin, in this way following the similar processes of elaborating and adopting strategic documents for other sea basins neighbouring Europe (e.g. the Baltic or the Mediterranean Seas). This process culminated in May 2019 with the adoption of the **Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea** together with its scientific pillar, the **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)**, during the Romanian Presidency to the Council of the European Union.

**Multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation** and, in particular, **civil society participation and engagement** are key for the implementation of the two agendas. The **2007 Black Sea Synergy Communication**, as well as its reviews published in **2015** & **2019**, recognise civil society as being essential for the development of the region and highlight the importance of civil society cooperation for building confidence and fostering political dialogue. Moreover, the **EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy** underlines the special importance civil society has in achieving resilience at the level of the society, much needed now than ever. At global level, civil society is recognised as a development actor in its own right, essential for achieving the **Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development**.

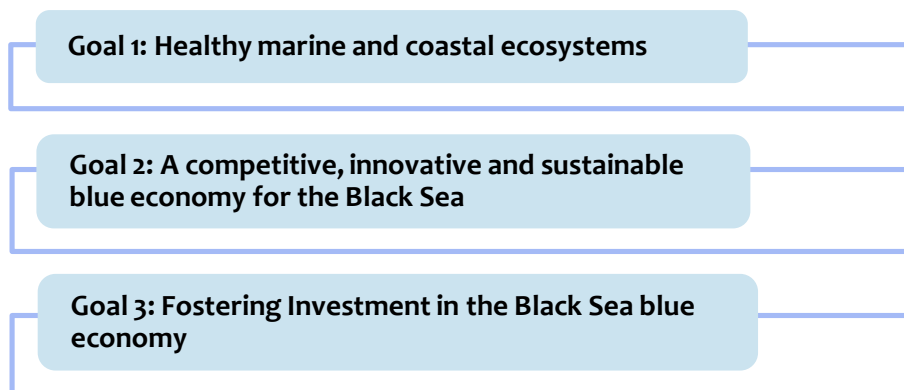
Having this in mind, the **Plenary Session "How to Strengthen Black Sea Cooperation? A Multi-Stakeholder Approach"**, **part of the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum**, had two objectives: on the one hand, presenting the Common Maritime Agenda and the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and, on the other hand, identifying potential contributions from civil society for the implementation of the two agendas. The following sections will present shortly the main characteristics of the two agendas, their goals and main directions, highlight the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement including civil society, as well as summarise the results of the CSO consultation on their potential contribution to the implementation of SRIA.



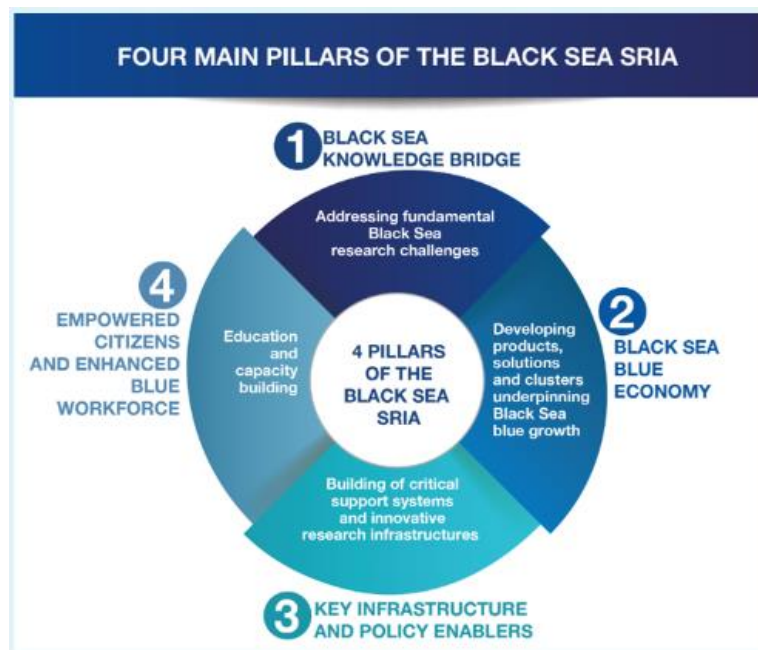
## II. THE AGENDAS

The **Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea** is a political document set and agreed by the 7 participating countries<sup>1</sup> through the [Ministerial Declaration](#) adopted on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2019, in Bucharest. It builds on the [2018 Burgas Ministerial Declaration “Towards a Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea”](#) in which a political commitment was made by these 7 countries to develop such an agenda for the Black Sea basin. The agenda is **based on the input of stakeholders** from the region, **inspired from similar initiatives** regarding other sea basins and was facilitated with the support of the European Commission.

The agenda covers fields essential to the development of blue economy in the Black Sea – maritime affairs, fisheries and aquaculture, research and innovation, connectivity, environment protection, tourism, education and training. It has **3 goals**, each with a set of priorities and dedicated actions.



The **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)** is a reference framework and a programmatic tool which aims to **guide relevant stakeholders** (academia, donors, industry, policymakers and civil society) to **address together the challenges** specific to the Black Sea, promote blue growth in the Black Sea region, build critical support systems and innovative research infrastructure and improve education and capacity building. SRIA is built on the common vision, principles and challenges identified in the [2018 Burgas Vision Paper](#). It has **4 main pillars**, each with a comprehensive set of actions and identified main actors and initiatives relevant for its implementation.



<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.



### III. CSOs POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SRIA

#### *How the CSOs and the Black Sea NGO Forum Are Reflected in SRIA*

The elaboration of SRIA followed a **bottom-up approach** and involved all relevant stakeholders from the region. In this sense, **civil society organisations** were identified as one of the main actors in the implementation of several goals from all 4 pillars, amongst which:

- *Providing new knowledge to mitigate the impact of global climate change;*
- *Supporting marine and maritime research and innovation;*
- *Promoting safe and sustainable economic growth of the marine and maritime sectors, the conservation and valorisation of marine cultural heritage;*
- *Supporting formal and informal learning, education and training for marine and maritime jobs.*

The **Black Sea NGO Forum** is also identified as one of the main actors which could contribute to the implementation of the following actions:

- *Promote socio-economic research focusing on coastal communities interacting with the marine ecosystem to understand how drivers of marine environment and human induced pressures impact the communities;*
- *Promote and foster synergies, through networking events and meetings towards capacity building to transfer knowledge between clusters in the blue economy and reinforce existing inter-sectorial arrangements;*
- *Develop and promote innovative marine litter management techniques both on land and sea in line with the principles of circular economy.*

#### *Results of the CSO Consultation held at the Black Sea NGO Forum, XII<sup>th</sup> edition*

During the **Plenary session “How to Strengthen Black Sea Cooperation? A Multi-Stakeholder Approach”**, participants worked in groups of 4-5 people and identified potential contributions that CSOs might be able to bring under the 4 pillars of the SRIA.

##### **Pillar 1 – Black Sea Knowledge Bridge**

- Contributing to the elaboration and implementation of a Black Sea Barometer, to measure trends on enabling environment at the regional level (with local level contributions), having as an example the [Caucasus Barometer](#).

##### **Pillar 2 – Black Sea Blue Economy**

- Advocating to enforce tougher legislation on pollution;
- Conducting environmental trainings for local citizens organised by CSOs and the private sector. Subsequently, the private sector can sponsor the environmental projects initiated by CSOs;
- Supporting the creation and implementation of a common university curriculum and a student mobility programme across the Black Sea region with the purpose of youngsters learning more about the blue economy and how they can benefit from it for future career development;



- Providing support for research in the communities from marine/ coastal areas based on which to design programs for building the skills of the people living in this kind of communities so that they can better engage in the blue economy.

### **Pillar 3 – Key Infrastructure and Policy Enablers**

- Identifying the necessary resources for building infrastructure for critical support systems and also for the research infrastructure;
- Contributing to expertise & policy design;
- Advocating for better infrastructure and policy.

### **Pillar 4 – Empowered citizens and enhanced blue workforce**

- Emphasize the importance of education and environment (e.g. related to water consumption);
- Carrying out awareness raising activities on environmental issues using digitalized means of communication, as well as organising youth events and introducing in local schools' curricula topics related to sustainability (including the Sustainable Development Goals) and blue economy;
- Supporting the creation of sustainable local business, while keeping in mind the idea of community resilience.

---

**The Black Sea NGO Forum** is an annual regional event first organised in 2008 by the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND) in the context of the Black Sea Synergy European Policy, with the support of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Representation of the European Commission in Romania and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation. Since 2013 the Forum is financially supported by the European Union.

The Forum's goal is to **create an open space for debate, mutual knowledge and understanding, communication and cooperation** among civil society representatives, governments, international organizations and donors active in the Black Sea Region, with a focus on sharing good practices in various domains and success stories of regional cooperation.

The Plenary Session "How to Strengthen Black Sea Cooperation? A Multi-Stakeholder Approach" and related CSO consultation held at the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum are part of **a continuous focus since 2015 to raise the awareness of CSOs in the Black Sea region on European maritime and marine issues and increase their engagement in dedicated policies.**

The conclusions of this reflection paper will be widely disseminated to our database of Black Sea NGO Forum participants, as well as relevant stakeholders such as EU institutions, global coalitions and networks, donors active in the region and other regional initiatives.

